September 12, 1996 Thursday

Dear Tony,

I wanted to write and share some notes with you regarding your show, MILES TO GO BEFORE I SLEEP, as you requested. I preface these words by saying accept them only as my suggestions and responses to you work, but take liberty to disregard that which does not serve you.

Let me once more thank you for providing me a comp ticket to see the show; I certainly am glad I didn't miss it. Without your kind gesture, I would not have been able to come.

I'd like to start by saying it is noble that you are wanting to share your experiences through this piece; your story is important, interesting and has the potential to educate, uplift and challenge many future audiences.

I want to start by encouraging you to reconsider your title. It brings to mind the very very very very popular poem, "STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWING EVENING" by Robert Frost. The poem is so popular, it has become cliche. Since you never dwelled on your title in the piece, I want you to rethink using it, and chose a more gripping, thought-provoking name for your show using your own words. Search the script for the central idea and sum it up in a word or line, and let that word or line be your title.

I thought your setting was appropriate. You had a good number of props and used them in the performance. Be mindful not to put anything on the stage that you are not using during the performance. You had many long pauses; that is not always effective. It makes the audience think you have forgotten your lines, or alerts us that your sound and/or light cues are off. You not must let the audience know you are in distress. I would encourage you to make sure all your technical requirements for the show are met, and that cues are followed precisely. It makes your show flow better and appear more professional, polished.

I think your choice of pieces was good. I was a bit baffled by the 'before 30' piece because of the long silence, and because you did not talk about the obituaries you were reading and dropping on the floor.

I thought a number of the pieces had a lot of promise. The phone call to your mother, the moment of violent love making, the opening, etc. I could speak more in detail about this and other things if I had the script in front of me.

Be sure to condense as much as possible; "avoid being long-winded." Seek other kinds of stage business, so that you will always be interesting to watch. "Theatre is a show business;" it is vital that you stay busy on stage, unless the dramatic moment calls for it.

The end was not as logical, and I think that's because you say you cut it. Be sure if you edit it, you don't leave us hanging. You must finish the story.

You might consider having another actor do the show, just so you can take a look at it more objectively before doing it yourself. Somethings it really helps to hear it and see it before you, yourself, actually perform it. This can be done informally, just with you and your director and another actor.

It would be interesting to find ways of allowing the audience an opportunity to participate in your performance. You need us to come into your world. How will you make us step into your shoes, and feel what life is like as a black gay man living with AIDS? Perhaps we can discuss this further as well.

Always go beyond our expectation. Don't show us what we already know, strive to tell us what we won't know about your experience. What is the good part about your life now? What do you know you didn't know before? What brings you joy about the life you are living? What is it that keeps you fighting to live? That is what will reach your audiences. After you have told us of the despair, the fear, the pain, the promiscuity, tell us what gives you the power. What separates us from you or what makes you like us? You are the one that has the story that can enlighten us.

One thing that most impressed me about Assoto Saint and Tre was that they found a kind of freedom after AIDS. The found a courage, an anger, a greater love for themselves and for others. They found a kind of peace others didn't know about. Their tongues were untied. Think on these things as you revise your work.

Your story is too important to lean on stereotypes or just the darkness. The beauty is the light you have. Write about that. Let it shine. That will save us and yourself. I believe you are driven to do this piece because you want to be heard, you want us to see, you want to end the silence, you want to open the closet for those who have shame and guilt and pity and hopelessness.

As a cancer survivor, I know..... Folks like you and I know things that most folks don't. We are so blessed. We know how to see the color purple. We know how to love with all our heart. We know how to cuss somebody out when we have to, because we don't have time to waste. Let your show be about your discoveries, your new understanding of patience, your confrontation of death, your resurrection. There is always a resurrection.

Finally, I want you to know how much I respect you and am inspired by you. You are a wonderful expression of God. Give thanks for every moment that has brought you to who you are now.....every love and loss.....every piece of fried chicken and plate of collard greens.....every rejection and every acceptance. Embrace them all

and then tell us the story of your life. We need it desperately.

I thank you for letting me share these thoughts with you. I support you in this project, and would be very glad to sit with you and go over the script or do anything that would be more helpful to you.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Trust yourself and go forth.

With adoration and solidarity,

Shirlene

Shirlene Holmes, Ph. D.
(404) 893-9931

Anji Brown
681-B Delmar Ave., S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30312

February 13, 1996

Tony Daniels
*Presiden*t, ADODI MUSE
348 Berean Ave., S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30312

Dear Tony,

This letter is to express my appreciation of the recent program held at Spelman College, "Unity Through Personal Empowerment". It was refreshing to be among strong and positive guests such as *Mandy Carter*, *Badili Jones*, *Charlene Cothran* & other African American lesbians & gays of color who challenge their personal involvement in the issues of development and social exposure. Like so many others, I also praise Alishia Bristow for succeeding in presenting an attendance of organizations that seek to uplift and unite the African America lesbian and gay community. Their presence helps to encourage others to pursue improvement of our equality and visibility in Atlanta.

This letter is also to extend my support to your organization and its continued efforts in presenting a strong and positive platform for our future sisters and brothers 'coming out' to an imperfect society.

Warm regards,

Anji Brown
Power Point® Graphics

Anji Brown
681-B Delmar Ave., S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30312

February 13, 1996

Tony Daniels
***President*, ADODI MUSE**
348 Berean Ave., S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30312

Dear Tony,

This letter is to express my appreciation of the recent program held at Spelman College, "Unity Through Personal Empowerment". It was refreshing to be among strong and positive guests such as *Mandy Carter*, *Badili Jones*, *Charlene Cothran* & other African American lesbians & gays of color who challenge their personal involvement in the issues of development and social exposure. Like so many others, I also praise Alishia Bristow for succeeding in presenting an attendance of organizations that seek to uplift and unite the African America lesbian and gay community. Their presence helps to encourage others to pursue improvement of our equality and visibility in Atlanta.

This letter is also to extend my support to your organization and its continued efforts in presenting a strong and positive platform for our future sisters and brothers 'coming out' to an imperfect society.

Warm regards,

Anji Brown
Power Point® Graphics